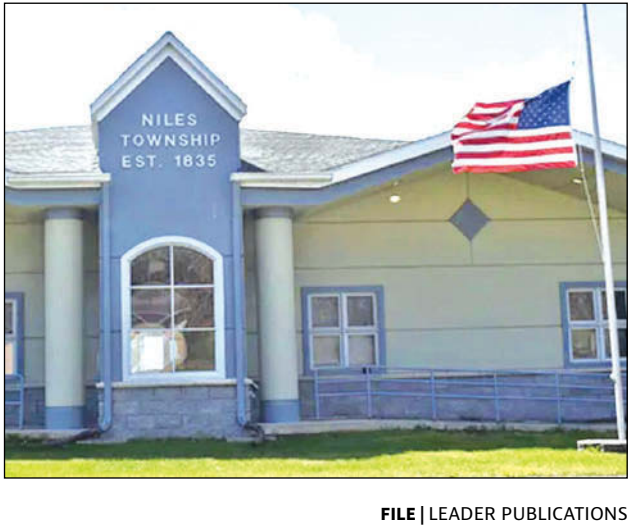


Niles Township approves \$2.4 million township hall renovation bid



FILE | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Niles Charter Township's quest for an improved township hall is one step closer to reality.

The Board of Trustees moved Monday to accept a \$2.4 million bid from DJ Construction of Elkhart, Ind. for the renovation and expansion of the township hall, located at 320 Bell Rd.

According to township officials, the current township hall has served the community since the 1960s and lacks the space and the infrastructure to meet the growing demands and needs of the community and township staff.

The expansion would add approximately 3,100 square feet of space to the building, which will provide more space for staff as well as storage space for important documents and election equipment.

The meeting room will have its own entrance on the west side of the building and township services will also be located on the west side. Township Supervisor Marge Durm-Hiatt said the project is expected to take approximately 270 days to complete with an estimated completion date of May 2025.

Township officials said the project would be funded using approximately \$1.5 million from the township's fund

balance and approximately \$400,000 from American Rescue Plan Act funds with the remaining cost being paid for by financing.

The township hall will be closed through the duration of the project starting Thursday when staff will begin moving to the township's new temporary home at the Greater Niles Senior Center, 1109 Bell Rd, Niles. The township will provide services at the new location beginning Monday at traditional hours. Board meetings will take place at the township fire department until the township hall is complete.

See BID, Page B3

Brandywine school board members debate Title IX policy changes

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

BRANDYWINE — The Brandywine Community Schools Board of Education met Monday and a significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to discussion on Title IX.

Members debated whether to adopt a new board policy that recognizes the changes in federal Title IX regulations that went into effect Aug. 1. The new rule expands the 1972 federal law barring sex discrimination in education to add protections for LGTBQ+ students.

Board members ended up defeating the adoption on a 2-3 vote with two members absent. Brian Burge and Jessica Crouch did not attend Monday's meeting.

Board members in favor of adopting the new policy were John Jarpe and Holly Pomranka. Those against were Elaine McKee, Michelle McCombs and Thomas Payne. This was Jarpe's first meeting after being appointed to the board last week by the RESA Board of Education after the Brandywine board deadlocked on who to appoint in early July.

Payne made the most comments against the proposed new policy, advocating instead for developing a policy that would recognize the new federal regulations but also add in protections for female students. He wants to gather community input for a different policy that could be voted on before the start of the school year in late August.

Pomranka questioned whether the district will be

legally liable if the board doesn't have the new policy. Payne said he didn't think the district would have any liability unless someone filed a discrimination suit. Members also debated whether the district could lose any federal funding if it doesn't adopt a new Title IX policy.

Superintendent Travis Walker said the district could at the most possibly lose federal funding for specific items. "If someone files a Title IX complaint, they would ask for our policy if we went to litigation," he said. "Then we might get into trouble if we don't have a policy and could run into some issues."

Payne pointed out that the district is "obviously" going to abide by the law. "But it's a matter of what policies can we put in place that will be in line with the statute but also assure the safety of female athletes," he said.

"There's been a lot of controversy over this," he added. "My daughter went through high school sports and there is no way she would be comfortable with having males in the locker room or on the field. We have to protect girls' safety and safe spaces. That has to be first and foremost. If a female feels uncomfortable, that should be the priority."

"We can work to develop a policy that does both-abide by the law and protect girls so they are comfortable in the classroom and the locker room," he said. "I feel sure we can come up with a policy that does both ... We could have individual changing rooms and not allow anyone to walk around nude among

See POLICY, Page A8



'IT'S SPECIAL'

Hallmark Home Mortgage opens first Michigan branch

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A mortgage company's first Michigan location has opened its doors in Edwardsburg.

Hallmark Home Mortgage hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony

Wednesday to celebrate the opening of its new lending center in Edwardsburg at 68817 Cass St. The property was formerly home to CARMi Design Group.

The Fort Wayne, Indiana-based company offers a broad selection of traditional loan products, construction loans, specialty

products, refinance programs and more. The event was catered by mobile beverage service Red Truck and Trailer.

"We're just super excited to be able to bring Hallmark Home Mortgage to Michigan," said

See OPENS, Page A8



MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Hallmark Home Mortgage hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday to celebrate the opening of its new lending center in Edwardsburg at 68817 Cass St.



Elkhart man who stole car, struck police cars in Buchanan Township gets prison time

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — An Elkhart man who stole a truck and struck police cars will be going to prison after being sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court. Meanwhile, a Niles man who sexually molested a young girl over a five year period also received a prison sentence.

Andrew Wallace Siciliano, 34, of



Siciliano

Elkhart, pleaded guilty to third-degree fleeing and eluding police, unlawful driving away of an automobile and two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to four concurrent prison terms. He must pay \$462 in fines and costs and \$27,443 in restitution to K&R Construction.

He received a 29 month to 60 month prison term for fleeing and eluding, a 38 month to 60 month prison term for unlawful driving away of an automobile and two sentences of 29 months to 48 months for

the assault with a dangerous weapon counts. He has credit for 82 days already served.

The incident occurred May 14 in Buchanan Township. Siciliano was barefoot and walked a long distance before stealing a truck from a construction company. He then rammed a number of police cars before being arrested.

"His actions speak for themselves," Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Vigansky said. "Running away from police was one thing but then he rammed police cars. What he did was totally stupid

and in total disregard of the rules. He's lucky to be here and the officers are lucky to be here."

Defense attorney Carri Briseno said Siciliano was diagnosed with a number of mental health conditions in 2022. She said he had not been taking his medications and had been using meth at the time of the incident. "He dug himself into a hole and jeopardized the safety of himself and officers," she said.

Siciliano apologized and said he

See PRISON, Page A8

OBITUARIES

Larry Alan Norris
Deatrice Booker
Lorraine Sellers
Roman Gill
Geraldine I. Riley
Diana Grishaber
Judith Lohraff
Ann Widerquist
Mary Lou Grathwohl

Joseph E. Chorba Jr.
Jeffery "Jeff" Churchill
Karen S. Laws
Nina J. Hanner
Michael Wells
Nancy Mead
Eugene Henderson
Tammy Eileen Kelley

A4, A6, A7

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

"Go Lions — this is the year!"



Participation
MHSA numbers continue to rise

A2

B1



FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call Frankly at (269) 687-7702 or email scott.novak@leaderpub.com

“Asked my boss to have my paycheck given to me. I was told “Only direct deposit is allowed.” I like my paycheck given to me directly. I want it in my hands without using a computer. It was that way for years. There is a special joy when a boss hands out paychecks. I sure miss that.”

“Why did our political divide become so great? Don’t we all pretty much want the same things in life? You know ... women making decisions for themselves rather than old men making decisions for them?”

“Vote! It is important to be part of the process.”

“Not real happy about 3rd St. construction happening before 11th St. in Niles is finished. Another questionable decision made by the state.”

“Dowagiac has such a nice downtown. Nice, well kept, buildings without broken windows is the charm of Dowagiac and Cassopolis. I think Niles needs to have a conversation with these landlords who haven’t raised a finger to repair their building’s exteriors.”

“Please carry a bag when walking your dog. No reason to feed the flies on the sidewalk.”

“Don’t complain about the heat. Soon it will be February and 10 below zero with 2 feet of snow.”

“Go Lions — this is the year!”

“If you can’t be-nice, just be-gone. Life is very short when you look back and see how quickly it flew by. A gesture of kindness can go a long way.”

“Can oak manor get some roads fixed? I think my corner drain is well down at least a car height if one accidentally doesn’t turn wide enough to miss it...”

“They have known for years,it’s nothing new to have lead in the water.”

“Fall sports practice begins Monday. There is not a more exciting time of year. The smell of freshly mowed grass and the sight of freshley line feel is unlike any other feeling. Make sure you get out at some point during the season to cheer on your favorite high school this fall. It is the most entertaining thing you can do for under \$10.”

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Sunny	Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Sunny
72° 58°	75° 55°	78° 59°	80° 60°	81° 62°	83° 62°

ANNUAL FORT ST. JOSEPH OPEN HOUSE DRAWS HUNDREDS

By **MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A local archaeological project offered visitors a chance to travel back in time to learn how the “City of Four Flags” came to be.

The Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Open House was hosted Saturday, Aug. 3 and Sunday, Aug. 4 at the site of Fort St. Joseph, an 18th-century trading post, mission, and garrison located on the St. Joseph River in Niles.

The project is a collaboration between Western Michigan University Archaeological Field School and the City of Niles, with support from the greater community.

“A lot of the local community has come out. Returning visitors have also come,” said Fort St. Joseph Field Director Dr. Erika Hartley. “It’s fun to see everyone wearing their Fort St. Joseph T-shirts.”

From its founding in 1691 until its abandonment in 1781, the Fort was controlled by three European countries: France, Britain, Spain, and was also occupied by several Native American groups, including the Potawatomi. That distinction is why Niles is known as the “City of Four Flags.”

For more than twenty-five years, WMU archaeology staff and students have worked to reveal the history of Niles’ Fort St. Joseph. More than 500 visitors came out to see the site.

“People think that with archeology, you have to travel far away for it and you don’t – it’s everywhere,” she said. “You can do archeology wherever people are living. It tells us about the past, our human history. It’s really nice to be able to

do that locally and have people learn and connect. This is my history, this is what I’ve learned. Now I can also go to this archaeological site and they can show me directly where some of the evidence for that knowledge is coming from.”

Guests were invited to tour the excavation area where display tables of artifacts were provided. Sarett Nature Center offered

See FORT, Page B3

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

The Fort St. Joseph Archaeology Open House was hosted Saturday, Aug. 3 and Sunday, Aug. 4 at the site of Fort St. Joseph, an 18th-century trading post, mission, and garrison located on the St. Joseph River in Niles.

CORRECTION

In the Music and More story in the Aug. 3 edition of the Star stated that more than 5,500 people attended the Katmandu concert in downtown Niles when the number was actually more than 500. Leader Publications regrets the error.

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Dowagiac, MI 49047

City council candidate flyer sparks controversy

By **MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A flyer distributed by a city council candidate caused a stir ahead of the Aug. 6 Primary Election.

In a Monday evening Facebook post, City of Niles Mayor Nick Shelton addressed claims made against the city via a Theresa Briand flyer distributed to citizens residing in Ward 1 of the city and publicly opposed her candidacy. Briand was one of three people running for Ward 1 City Council seat, along with incumbent Georgia Boggs and Jamie Bennett. Both Boggs and Bennett received enough votes during Tuesday's election to move on to the Nov. 5 general election.

"In the eight years I've served as your mayor, I've never publicly endorsed or opposed a candidate — until now," Shelton wrote. "With the primary election for Ward 1 tomorrow, I feel compelled to address some false claims circulating in a recent flyer... I've always aimed

to earn your trust through transparency, responsiveness, and dedication. Therefore, I'm concerned about the potential impact on our community if certain individuals are elected."

The flyer — produced and paid for by Ward 4 councilmember Michael Thompson — featured a list of three issues Briand is focusing on during her campaign — fixing dilapidated roads, lowering taxes and "stopping wasteful spending" using "downtown vanity projects" such as The Forge as an example. The flyer states that stopping the wasteful spending would help pay to fix roads and lower taxes.

According to Shelton, Thompson has consistently voted against community engagement initiatives, including the Memorial Day Parade.

"Additionally, Thompson has two relatives running for other ward seats, raising questions about the motives behind this support," Shelton wrote.

Shelton said that roadway improvements are primarily funded through state-collected fuel taxes and that despite ongoing discussions at the state level, current funding is insufficient to meet needs. He added that the city has spent \$5.2 million on roadway, sidewalk, and parking lot improvements within the city over the past three years, not counting MDOT projects.

"While the City has the option to allocate local tax revenues for road maintenance, as it did 15 or more years ago, doing so would necessitate cuts in other essential services," Shelton wrote. "Our balanced budget prioritizes basic services without compromising financial stability. If we choose to invest local dollars in roadway maintenance, what service should we reduce?"

In addressing the city's taxes, Shelton stated the base millage rate of 15 mills, set by the city's charter and regulated by the State of Michigan, has decreased to

13.5921 mills because of the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A.

"These laws ensure that tax rates adjust with community growth and protect property owners from excessive increases, capped at the rate of inflation or 5 percent," he wrote.

Regarding Briand's claim about downtown spending, Shelton said it likely refers to the new sidewalks and outdoor hub, funded by American Rescue Plan Act and Revitalization and Placemaking grants.

"Importantly, RAP grants were specific to these projects and could not be used for streets," Shelton wrote. "Additionally, the downtown murals were paid for with private investments and not funded by the City."

Shelton ended his post urging community members to thoroughly research candidates and their claims.

"Misinformation can lead to misguided decisions that impact our community's future," he wrote. "Thank you

for your attention and commitment to informed voting," Briand provided the following response to Leader Publications regarding Mayor Shelton's post:

"I want to clarify that the flyer in question was produced and funded by Council Member Michael Thompson. Mr. Thompson, a dedicated advocate for fiscal responsibility in the 4th Ward who consistently prioritizes the concerns of Niles residents, also supported Mayor Shelton's re-election by signing his petition this year. I am confident that Mr. Thompson would have further supported Mayor Shelton's campaign had he not been running unopposed. It is contradictory for Mayor Shelton to now criticize Mr.

Thompson for supporting my candidacy.

"My campaign is focused on promoting transparency, accountability, and ensuring that every resident's voice is heard—principles that I believe will greatly benefit our community and taxpayers. I am also committed to encouraging voter engagement, as an informed electorate is essential for a vibrant democracy. It is disappointing that Mayor Shelton has chosen to target and publicly oppose those who champion the principles of integrity, responsible spending, and thorough consideration of all residents' concerns, instead of engaging in meaningful and constructive dialogue. Thank you for your attention."

PET OF THE WEEK

Meet **Salsa**, a dog with Berrien County Animal Control. Salsa enjoys other dogs and can also entertain himself with a toy. Volunteers said he is working on his leash manners and seems to be in a hurry to get anywhere. Once there, he likes to just chill by your side. He is neutered, fully-housetrained, microchipped and is current on vaccinations. Contact Berrien County Animal Control at (269) 927-5648.





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Thursday, August 15th Sponsored by:  COOK PLANT  DIRECT FROM SWEDEN THE MUSIC OF ABBA Show Time: 7 p.m. Ticket Price: \$25, \$20, \$15 Reserved Seating	Friday, August 16th Sponsored by:  DEMOLITION DERBY! Show Time: 8 p.m. Tickets: \$15, Reserved Seating Produced by: TNT Demolition Derby Michigan Presented by: 	Saturday, August 17th Sponsored by:  BULL-MANIA! Show Time: 7 p.m. Tickets: \$15 Reserved Seating Produced by: Super Kicker Rodeo Production Presented by: 

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Fair Office: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Mon.-Sat.)
Food Vendors: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Mon.-Sat.)
A few are open for breakfast

Commercial Exhibits:
11 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (Monday-Friday)
11 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Saturday)

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DEATH NOTICES

Larry Alan Norris, 71, passed away on Wednesday, Aug. 7, 2024 in Niles Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Deatrice Booker, 85, of Cassopolis, died Saturday, Aug. 3, 2024. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Con-

nelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

Lorraine Sellers, 83, of Granger, passed away Monday, Aug. 5, 2024. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, of Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Roman Gill, 95, of Niles, for-

merly of Escanaba passed away on Thursday, Aug. 1, 2024 at Brentwood of Niles. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home, Niles.

Geraldine I. Riley, 93, of Kalamazoo, died Wednesday, July 31, 2024. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

James Bolyard, 66, of Dowagiac, passed away Wednesday, July 31, 2024 surrounded by his family. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles.

Diana Grishaber, 75, of Niles, passed away at The Timbers on July 31, 2024 surrounded by her

family. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Judith Lohraff, 84, of Buchanan, passed away on Wednesday, July 31, 2024. Arrangements have been made with Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs. www.AllredFuneralHome.com. Services on Aug. 8 at 12 p.m.

OBITUARIES



JoAnn Widerquist

May 13, 1931-July 26, 2024

JoAnn Gluesenkamp Widerquist, 93, of Notre Dame, Indiana, formerly of Cassopolis, Michigan, died peacefully Friday, July 26, 2024. She suffered a stroke and rested quietly for four days before finally succumbing to its effects while in the comfort of her family's presence.

She was in many ways the consummate nurse and caregiver. In her long and varied career, she worked in virtually all aspects of nursing. She believed that nursing is about more than curing disease; it is about healing the person by attending to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

She was born on May 13, 1931, in Batesville, Indiana, the youngest of two girls born to Gilbert Herman and Louise Hoegemeier Gluesenkamp.

JoAnn began her career at the age of fourteen as a nurse's aide at St. Mary's hospital in Batesville, Indiana. She graduated from the Indiana University School of nursing in 1953. She worked as a visiting nurse in Indianapolis, taught at Barea College in Kentucky, and then earned a master's degree in nursing education from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

While teaching at the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing in 1960, she met Allan Leonard Widerquist at an InterVarsity Christian Fellowship event. The two were married on April 29, 1961, in Batesville, Indiana.

The following year they moved to Chicago so that Allan could attend North Park Theological Seminary. JoAnn returned to hospital work and took time away from professional nursing to give birth to three children.

In 1969, the family moved to Cassopolis, Michigan so that Allan could take up a post as pastor at the United (Presbyterian) Church of Cassopolis.

JoAnn worked for several years teaching nursing at Southwestern Michigan College before returning to public health

as nursing supervisor of the Cass County Health Department.

She returned to teaching again in the late 1970s when she took a fulltime faculty position at the Department of Nursing, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame. Her research specialized in the history and theory of nursing, particularly regarding the spirituality of Florence Nightingale. She became department head in 1987 and retired in 1994 after which she continued to teach part time at Bethel College in South Bend, give time to her grandchildren and community, and travel widely with her husband.

JoAnn loved mystery novels, flowers, and music. She was an efficient organizer, wonderful baker, and true friend to many near and far. She was a beloved teacher to the generations of nurses she taught from the 1950s to the 2000s.

JoAnn is survived by her husband of 63 years, The Reverend Allan L. Widerquist of Notre Dame, Indiana; one daughter, Kristine L. (Clu, A. Hagenbuch) Widerquist of Cassopolis; two sons, Tim (Hiromi Ose) Widerquist of South Bend, Indiana, Karl (Elizabeth Smith) Widerquist of New Orleans, Louisiana; six grandchildren, Nicholas W. (Marissa) Bosler of Palatine, Illinois, Anna Bosler (John IV) Santeiu of Farmington Hills, Michigan, Thomas A. Bosler (Marilla Opra) Widerquist of Saline, Michigan, Eric J. (Alexis) Bosler of Cassopolis, Michigan, Grayson E. Hagenbuch of Cassopolis, Michigan, Aki Ose Widerquist of Seattle, Washington; two great grandchildren, Sophia Betty Bosler, John Nicholas Santeiu V; along with one nephew, four great nieces, and one great nephew.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Gilbert and Louise Gluesenkamp, by her sister and brother-in-law, Matilda and Owen Schumacher, and by her beloved niece, Owenita Grubert.

Family and friends will gather Friday, Aug. 9, 2024, at the United Presbyterian Church, 209 East State Street, Cassopolis, Michigan, from 12:30 p.m. until time of service at 2 p.m. also at the church, a reception will follow.

The family prefers contributions in memory of JoAnn be made to The United Presbyterian Church of Cassopolis (269) 445-2664.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message

online: wagnercares.com

Mary Lou Grathwohl

Sept. 13, 1929-July 31, 2024

Mary Lou Grathwohl passed away peacefully, with family at her side, on July 31, 2024, in Notre Dame, Indiana. Born on Sept. 13, 1930, Mary Lou's life was a testament to the power of family, faith and love.

Mary Lou was the only child of George and Helen (Gould) Judd of St. Johns, MI. She married Joseph R. Grathwohl, on July 11, 1953, in St Johns. Their legacy is carried on by their children: Tom Grathwohl of Atlanta, GA, Gary Grathwohl of Niles, MI, and Kent Grathwohl of Bloomfield Hills, MI. Mary Lou was a proud grandmother to Michael, Nathan, and Evan Grathwohl, and David and Nathan Edge. Each of them carries a piece of Mary Lou's spirit within them, as she sought to be a constant source of love and wisdom in their lives.

Her passion for learning began at St. Johns high school, where she graduated with honors. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from Central Michigan University. Mary Lou's commitment to education continued in Niles at Westside Elementary School and later included substitute teaching and adult education teaching assignments in Niles & Brandywine. She touched the lives of students with her wisdom and guided them with a gentle hand and an open heart.

Mary Lou loved to write poetry about her family, friends and holidays. She complied many of these poems into three published books. She followed her passion for gardening through development projects at the Fernwood Botanical Garden and she was an active member of the Downtown Niles Merchant Association. She was athletic, always competitive and passed these traits onto her boys.

Mary Lou and Joe's partnership was a true collaboration of love and support. They developed "The Bath Shop" as an extension of their family business, Grathwohl Plumbing and Heating. Their shared endeavors extended beyond work, as they were longtime members of St. Mary's Catholic Church, where their faith and dedication to community shone brightly.

Together, Mary Lou and Joe shared a life filled with adventure and exploration which included visiting thirty-eight countries. Their travels were not merely vacations but journeys of the spirit, as they sought

to understand the world's diverse cultures and connect with people from all walks of life. This love of exploration was a vivid reflection of their loving nature as they welcomed international exchange students into their home as well.

Mary Lou is preceded in death by her husband, Joe, her son Jimmy, and her parents George and Helen Judd. Yet the memories and lessons they shared will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew them. A memorial service will be held at a later time to accommodate current family health treatment schedules. Mary Lou will be laid to rest next to her beloved husband Joe and son Jimmy at Calvary Cemetery in Niles.

Memories of Mary Lou may be shared with her family at www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles.



Joseph E. Chorba Jr.

Dec. 6, 1952-July 28, 2024

Joseph E. Chorba Jr. 71, passed away on Sunday, July 28, 2024, in Dowagiac, Michigan, surrounded by his loving family.

Joseph was born on Dec. 6, 1952, in Dowagiac, Michigan to the late Joseph E. Chorba Sr. and Mary J. (Smeltzer) Davidson.

Along with his parents, Joseph was preceded in death by his sister.

Left to cherish the memory of Joseph is his loving wife of 53 years, Phyllis (Withers) Chorba; daughter, Tereasa (Rob) Smith; son, Mike (Paula) Chorba; 5 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren.

Joseph was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and respected businessman. A true family man, Joseph's 53 years of loving marriage to his wife, Phyllis, were the foundation upon which he built a life full of joy and lasting memories.

An enthusiast of the great outdoors, Joseph found pleasure in fishing, hunting, and escaping to the serene cabin he skillfully crafted up north. His passion for restoring Jeeps was more than a hobby —

it was a testament to his mechanical genius and a reflection of his adventurous spirit.

A pillar of his community, he ran a successful business for over 30 years, showing the same dedication and care to his work as he did to his cherished grandchildren. Joseph's legacy is one of love, commitment, and the tireless pursuit of happiness, echoing in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing him.

In keeping with Joseph's wishes, there will be no services held at this time.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home.

Photos, condolences, and memories may be left for Joseph's family at www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com



Jeffery "Jeff" Churchill

Sept. 29, 1959-July 30, 2024

Jeffrey Allan "Jeff" Churchill, 64, of Belvue, Kansas, passed away on Tuesday (July 30, 2024) at his home.

Born Sept. 29, 1959 in Dowagiac, Michigan, Jeff was the son of Luther and Mary (Cooper) Churchill. He met Fran Jilka when she worked as plant manager at the flour mill in Dowagiac and he was a driver for the mill. They were married on April 29, 1995 in Kansas City, Missouri. She survives.

Jeff was a long haul driver and concrete truck driver for many years. Most recently, he had been employed as a carpenter for J. S. Home Builders until his retirement.

Jeff loved taking care of his family, which included his many pet dogs, and was a stay at home dad for a time when they adopted their son, Ralph. He enjoyed piddling around in his garage, or as he called it, his "man cave" and was endlessly organizing his tools.

Surviving is his wife, Fran; his son, Raphael "Ralph" Churchill of Knoxville, TN; his grandson, Leeland; a sister, Becky Craft of Dowagiac, MI; and many nieces and nephews.

Jeff was preceded in death by his parents.

Funeral services will be held Friday (Aug.

9, 2024) at 10:30 in St. Bernard Catholic Church with Fr. Mike Peterson officiating. Burial will be in St. Bernard Cemetery. Jeff will lie in state beginning at 3 p.m. on Thursday (Aug. 8, 2024) at Campanella & Stewart Funeral Home in Wamego. The family will meet with friends Thursday from 5 to 7 with a Rosary Service at 7 p.m. at the funeral home.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations are requested to St. Bernard Catholic Church and those may be left with Campanella & Stewart Funeral Home, P. O. Box 48, Wamego, KS 66547.



Karen S. Laws

Feb. 22, 1968-July 30, 2024

Karen Sue Laws, 56, of Vandalia, died Monday, July 30, 2024.

Her life began Feb. 22, 1968 in Elkhart, Indiana the youngest of four children born to Donald and Katherine Neff.

Karen cherished her family and spending time with her daughter. She enjoyed playing with her two cats, Katie and Kelly, and playing bingo.

Karen will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by one daughter, Krystal Johnston of Constantine; her significant other of over twenty years, Douglas Johnston of White Pigeon; one sister, Kim (Stevan) Mathews of Vandalia; brothers, Wayne (Nanette) Neff of Nashville, Michigan, and Michael (Alice) Neff of Ohio.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Karen's life Saturday, Aug. 17, 2024, from 12 noon until 2 p.m. in the family residence. Please contact the funeral home to RSVP.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Karen be made to Wagner Family Funerals, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031, to assist the family with defraying expenses.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com

See OBITUARIES, Page A6

Niles Daily Star

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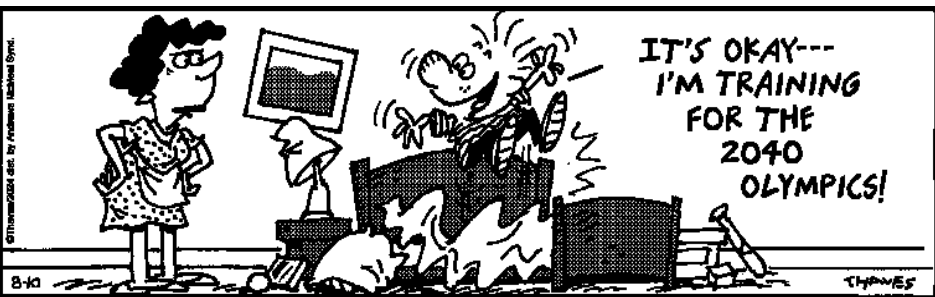
ARLO & JANIS



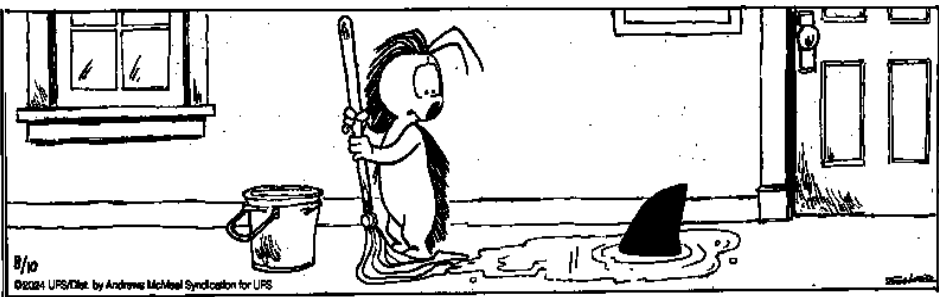
BIG NATE



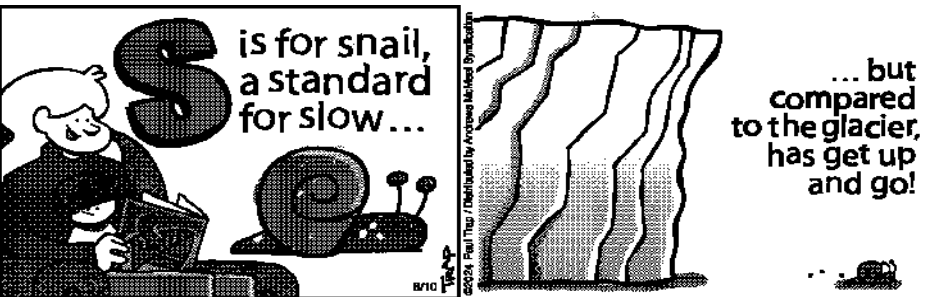
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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

			1		4	7		
		9		8			4	5
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MODERATELY CONFUSED



REALITY CHECK



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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4 Asian nurse
8 At a distance
12 Once — while
13 Finished
14 Stack
15 Green squash
17 Skin
18 Actress — Rolle
19 Mass meeting
21 “— you kidding me?”
22 Four-poster
23 Liable
26 Pair
28 Dynamite letters
31 Insect secretion
32 Helen of —
33 Cavalier
34 Play division
35 Chef
36 “— a girl!”
37 Positive vote

38 Prov. In
Canada
39 An
American
in Paris,
maybe
41 Break
43 "— — the
Walrus"
44 Tentacled
creature
46 Cooks a
certain way
50 Nevada
town
51 Missing
student
53 Serv.
branch
54 Spoiled
55 Tolkien
goblin
56 Fastener
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58 Came
upon

DOWN

1 Magnitude
2 Burden
3 Covenant
4 Hold fast
5 Wavy
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6 — Arbor,
MI

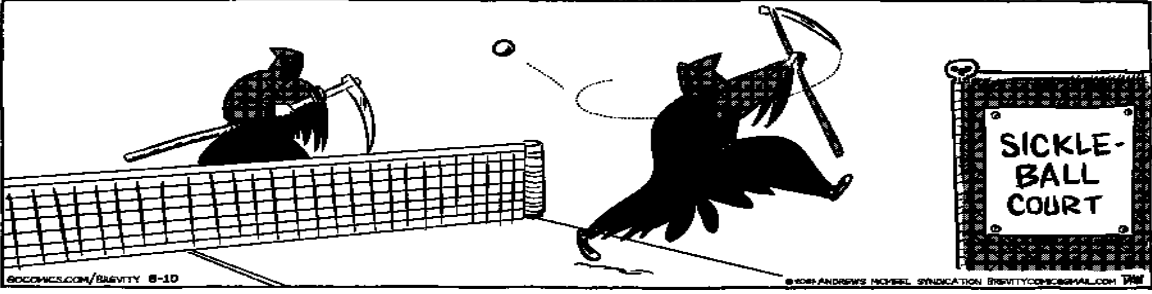
ANSWER ON PAGE 6

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9 School	pounds
excursion	35 Facsimile
(2 wds.)	39 Bistro
10 Trusted	40 Superhero
partner	team
11 Soak	(hyph.)
flax	42 Above
16 Actor	43 Put out
Jackie —	44 Money, in
20 "About	Mexico
—"	45 El —, TX
23 Make	47 Speck
music	48 Only
24 Hurry	49 Splinter
25 Like a stop	group
sign	50 Spice
26 Horse's	mixture
gait	52 Singer —
27 Skillet	Dylan

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BREVITY



HEART OF THE CITY



OBITUARIES

Continued from page A4



Nina J. Hanner
April 6, 1958-July 26, 2024

Nina Joleen Hanner, 66, of Cassopolis died peacefully early Friday morning, July 26, 2024 in the comfort of her family's presence. Her life began April 6,

1958, in Niles, Michigan, the third youngest of eight children born to Byron and Elizabeth Solloway. She married Jesse Hanner Dec. 22, 1991 in Cassopolis. Nina cherished her family and loved visiting with friends. She enjoyed crafting, crocheting, and playing bingo. She called herself, "The Bingo Queen." She kept a positive attitude and had a great sense of humor. She had a chime on her phone that would remind her to pray multiple times a day. Nina will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her husband, Jesse Hanner; sons, Matthew Hanner of Niles, Mark

(Leandra) Hanner of Edwardsburg; sisters, Delores Solloway of Cassopolis, Helen (Ken Jr.) Focht of Edwardsburg, Verda Fletcher of Elkhart, Indiana; brothers, Chuck Solloway of Cassopolis, Gene (Luann) Solloway of Niles, Jimmy Solloway of Cassopolis; and a host of nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by one son, Brandon, and brother, John Solloway. Family and friends will gather Saturday, Aug. 24, 2024, from 10 a.m. until time of memorial service at 11 a.m. in Pleasant View Church of Christ, 60550 Crooked Creek Road, Cassopolis, 49031. Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com

Michael Wells
Oct. 5, 1945-July 16, 2024

Michael Wells, 78, of Dowagiac died at The Timbers of Cass County on July 16, 2024. He was born in Elkhart, IN on Oct. 5, 1945 to



Ruby and Leonard Wells. Mike attended public school in Elkhart before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps and eventually studying Education at Western Michigan University. Mike excelled in music from a young age, specifically with percussion instruments. He was known throughout Cass County, MI as a meticulous interior painter and for many years was never seen without his beloved dog, Kelsey. Mike was active as both an actor and with set construction at Beckwith Theatre Company and was often seen volunteering with the Dowagiac Town & Country Garden Club. Mike is preceded in death by his parents as well as siblings Pam Beam, née Wells and Bill Wells. He is survived by one nephew, Eric Landes of Florida, a half-sister and close friends. A celebration of life is scheduled for 2-5p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 6, 2024 at the Dowagiac Elks Golf Course & Country Club. Family and friends are welcome to share memories and celebrate a life well lived. Light refreshments will be available. In lieu of flowers, friends suggest donations be made to Beckwith

Theatre Company or the Dowagiac Town & Country Garden Club, both organizations Mike felt strongly about.

Nancy Mead



March 14, 1939-July 31, 2024

Nancy Gail (North) Mead was born on March 14, 1939, in Galesburg, MI to Ruth Lenora Shafer and John Andrew North. She was a cherished wife, mother, grandmother, and friend. Nancy graduated from Marshall High School in 1957 and frequently claimed that the 1950's were the best of times. She furthered her education at Wright Beauty Academy and Kellogg Community College. Nancy worked at Edwardsburg Elementary while her children were in school, a role she found deeply rewarding. Nancy met Clark Elgin Mead in Sept. 1958, and the couple married on June 25, 1960. They celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary this year, a testament to their enduring love and commitment. Throughtout her life, Nancy found joy in many pursuits. An enthusiatstic artist, she nurtured her

love for drawing and painting. She was deeply involved in her church community, loved cooking, and took pleasure in solving crossword puzzles. Nancy and Clark enjoyed traveling to Gulf Shores and cherished family gatherings. Nancy's legacy lives on through her family. She is survived by her devoted husband, Clark, and her children: daughter Melody Lynn Graham and sons Andrew and Aidan, daughter Mary Beth Nichols, her husband Mike, and their children, Michael and ZZ. She is also survived by her younger sister Marcia and her husband Shirland, older sister Ruth Ann Haller, as well as many nieces, nephews, friends, and their faithful dog, Abby. Nancy will be remembered for her warmth, gentle spirit, and devotion to her family. A memorial service to honor Nancy's life will be held on Saturday, August 17th at Hope United Methodist Church 69941 Elkhart Road in Edwardsburg. Calling hours will begin at 10 a.m. with the service at 11 a.m. Inurnment will take place at Adamsville Cemetery, followed by a luncheon back at the church. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in Nancy's memory be made to Hope United Methodist Church Memorial Fund, 69941 Elkhart Road, Edwardsburg, Michigan 49112. Arrangements are by the Paul E. Mayhew Funeral Home, Edwardsburg.

Celebrate a life

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Starks
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CROSSWORD ANSWER

From Page 5

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SUDOKU ANSWER

From Page 5

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2	7	4	5	3	9	6	8	1

Mikel Auction

Thurs., August 22nd, 2024 • 10:00 am

Located 1/2 mile south of downtown Cassopolis, Michigan on M-62 (just across the tracks) to Dimond Cove St., then just east at 22897 Dimond Cove St. Cassopolis, MI 49031

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Third Grade	1	Tenth Grade	2
Fourth Grade	1	Eleventh Grade	2
Fifth Grade	1	Twelfth Grade	1
Sixth Grade	2		

Applications are available and being accepted electronically, July 29 - August 16, 2024, at www.edwardsburgpublicschools.org for any Kindergarten - 12th grade student living in Cass County and contiguous districts in Berrien, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Please complete a separate application for each student.

For more information, contact Kimberly Slack at 269-663-3055 or kslack@gooddies.com.

Additional spots will be considered as they become available.

OBITUARIES

Continued from page A6



Eugene Henderson
Jan. 20, 1929-Aug. 4, 2024

Eugene Judson "Gene" Henderson, age 95 years, formerly of Decatur, Illinois died peacefully on Sunday, August 4, 2024 at his home in Niles, Michigan.

He was born in Decatur on Jan. 20, 1929 to Lawrence J. and Gladys B. (Fiscus) Henderson; and was married in Decatur on July 5, 1947 to the former Helen C. Billick, with whom he celebrated the remarkable Seventy-third Anniversary of their marriage prior to her death on Oct. 30, 2020. They were sadly preceded in death by a son, Terry in 2002; and by Gene's parents and his two sisters.

Surviving family in Niles includes his daughter, Diane (& Pat) McCullough. Also surviving are Diane's siblings, Scott, Brad, Jeanne, and Terry's wife, Inge; eleven grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.

Family and friends

of Mr. Henderson will gather at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 2024 at the Halbritter-Wickens Funeral Home, 615 East Main Street in Niles, followed by a procession to Mission Hills Cemetery, 61453 M-51, Niles for a Committal Service with Bill Zebell, Caring Pastor at Berrien Center Bible Church officiating.. Complete obituary information may be found at www.halbritterwickens.com, where condolences to his family and memories may be offered.



Tammy Eileen Kelley
July 20, 1960-Aug. 3, 2024

Tammy Eileen Kelley, 64, of Buchanan, formerly Edwardsburg, passed away on Saturday, August 3, 2024, at her home in Buchanan.

A celebration of life service will be held at noon on Saturday, Aug. 24, 2024, at Community of Christ Church, South, 110 Cleveland Ave., Galien, MI. A time of gathering will take place one hour prior, from 11-12, also at

the church. Inurnment will take place at a later date in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Buchanan. Memorial contributions may be made to LaSalle Council, Boys Scouts of America, #165, 1340 S. Bend Ave., South Bend, Indiana, 46617. Arrangements have been entrusted to Swem Chapel, Buchanan, 269-695-6881. Those wishing to send a condolence online may do so at www.swemchapel.com.

Tammy was born on July 20, 1960, in Buchanan, MI. She graduated from Berrien Springs High School in 1978, then continued her education at Southwestern Michigan College. In 1979, she married A. Vaughn Armstrong, together they had three daughters, he preceded her in death. She later married Len J. Kelley, who preceded her in death in 2002.

Professionally, Tammy worked several years at Cass County Medical Care Facility as a Nursing Assistant, then several years at Brothers Bakery before injuring her back.

Tammy enjoyed being outdoors, gardening, and loved animals. She especially appreciated time at the zoo and bird

watching. Her most cherished moments were spent with her family, and she adored her grandchildren and was proud to help raise them.

Tammy is survived by her daughter, Katrina (Timothy, Sr.) VanDusen, their children, Andrew Vankirk, Gavin VanDusen and Timothy VanDusen; daughter, Jilliann (Timothy) Morrow, their dog, Buddy Morrow; daughter, Nichole (Joseph) Biggs, their children, Ronin Biggs and Isabella Biggs; step-mother, Maryanna Christy; step-son, Michael Babcock and family; step-son Len L. Kelley, his children, Kennedy Kelley, Mirah Kelley and Julianna Kelley; step-daughter, Diana Kelley-Ruiz and family; siblings, Paula (Arnold) Walker, Lyle (Valerie) Christy, Colleen (Ed) Kelley, Agatha (Dwayne) Shelton, Robert Christy, and Maryjo Bridges; great-granddaughter, Amerianna Kelley.

She was preceded in death by her father, Lyle Christy; mother, Marita (Noble) Westveer; 1st, husband, A. Vaughn Armstrong and 2nd husband, Len J. Kelley.



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Local golf outings

Pipestone Creek, Spruce Ridge hosting events

By SCOTT NOVAK
scott.novak@leaderpub.com

EAU CLAIRE — Summertime is golf outing season throughout southwest Michigan. With the summer season heading into its final two months, there is still time to take part in golf outings. The inaugural outing is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 7 at Pipestone Creek Golf Course in Eau Claire.

The outing is limited to the first 100 paid golfers. Cost is \$400 for a foursome, which includes 18 holes of golf and a cart, hot dog or brat at the turn, dinner afterward at the course, games and gimmicks, prizes, raffles and trophies.

There will also be prizes awarded to first and second place, longest drive (men and wome) and closest to the pin. Hole sponsorships are also available.

A gold sponsorship is \$500, which includes sign displayed on course and four golfers. A silver sponsorship is \$100, which includes sign displayed on golf course.

For more information, or to register, contact Dan Wilson at (269) 487-0079 or by email at slionsclub@yahoo.com

Dowagiac Big Hole Scramble

The Dowagiac soccer and wrestling Big Hole Scramble is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14 at Spruce Ridge Golf Club. Cost is \$240 per team (four people) or \$60 per person, which includes a meal after golf is completed.

There will also be \$20 mulligans and \$20 team skins, as well as prizes for closest to the pin, longest drive and a 50/50 drawing. Hole sponsorships are available.

A platinum sponsorship is \$500, which includes a name on the flag, an extra-large name on the golf banner, and a team entry. A gold sponsorship is \$200, which includes name on flag and large name on banner, while a silver sponsorship is \$100, which includes name on flag and medium name on banner.

Golfers may register online at jpasternak@dowagiacschools.org. Checks must be made out to Dowagiac Schools. For more information, call Joey Pasternak at (574) 309-3549 or Colin Burandt at (269)

Roadrunners sign Thornton's Rainey

COMMUNITY NEWS

DOWAGIAC — Vincent Rainey, of Thornton Township High School in Harvey, Illinois, has signed his National Junior College Athletic Association letter of intent to continue his academic and basketball career at Southwestern Michigan College.

“We are happy that Vincent has decided to continue his academic and athletic careers as a Roadrunner,” said Roadrunner Men’s Basketball Coach Davis said. “He is a talented guard that is wired to score. He can score at all three levels, but really excels as a long-range shooter. Defensively, he can be a disruptive force capable of guarding 94 feet.”

Rainey is the sixth signed member of the 2024 recruiting class, joining Davio,n Goins of Cassopolis; Damontae May, of Kankakee, Illinois; Kaiden Bierhalter, of Watervliet; and Javon Mason and Antwan Harbor.



Niles will appear on Friday Football Tailgate pregame show in its season opener at St. Joseph Aug. 30. Buchanan will also appear on the show when it travels to Dowagiac for its Lakeland Conference game Oct. 18.

Friday Football Tailgate

Niles, St. Joseph to appear in season opener Aug. 30

COMMUNITY NEWS

NILES — Friday Football Tailgate, the electrifying pre-game show dedicated to high school football rivalries and big matchups, is set to kick off its first season this fall in southwest Michigan. This unique program promises viewers an experience that highlights the essence of Friday night lights while channeling

the energetic spirit reminiscent of College Gameday. Produced by Little Red Fern Productions and TPC Technologies, Friday Football Tailgate is a one-hour pre-game show that will capture the heart and soul of high school football rivalries, bringing together coaches, athletes, and alumni for a dynamic celebration prior to opening kickoffs. With a spirited production team and a College Gameday-inspired vibe, the show will combine exclusive interviews, insightful analysis, and a lively pre-game atmosphere to deliver an unforgettable experience.

ence. Ryan Cheevers, owner of Little Red Fern Productions, shares his excitement: “Friday Football Tailgate will bring the authenticity and grassroots spirit of high school football to the forefront,” he said. “We’re celebrating the communities, the rivalries, and the stories that make high school football so special, and we can’t wait to kick this off on August 30th at St. Joseph when the Bears welcome the Vikings.”

See FOOTBALL, page B2



For the second consecutive season, wrestling was the top sport as far as increase participation according to the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

Participation increases again

Wrestling leads the way for the second consecutive year

COMMUNITY NEWS

EAST LANSING — Participation in Michigan High School Athletic Association-sponsored sports rose for the third-straight school year in 2023-24 — this time by nearly one percent — and continued to do so despite another 2-percent decrease in school enrollment among the MHSAA’s 754 member

high schools. A total of 270,664 participants were counted across the 28 sports for which the MHSAA sponsors postseason tournaments — a 0.97-percent increase from 2022-23 and despite a 1.8-percent decrease in MHSAA member school enrollment. Boys participation rose 1.1 percent to

See INCREASE, page B2

Lewis, Martell, Seals win Niles City Golf titles

Senior A, B Flights, Women's title decided

By SCOTT NOVAK
scott.novak@leaderpub.com

NILES — Rick Lewis captured the Niles City Golf Tournament's Senior Men's A Flight championship at Plym Park Golf Course.

Lyle Martell won the B Flight title, while Candy Seals won the Women's Division crown.

Lewis shot a 149 to defeat runner-up Tony Gadeski by nine strokes.

Dave Hopper and Jim Conrad tied for third place with a 159, while Bruce Burkett and Dave Krause tied for fifth with a 160.

Martell finished with a 188 to defeat second-place German Ruiz by six strokes.

Ron Saxton was third with a 201 and Mark Schlutt fourth with a 204.

Jamie Moody shot 99 on the first day of competition, while Seals trailed by eight strokes.

Seals made up the ground on Sunday to win the title. Rose Prenkert finished third.

Niles City Golf Tournament At Plym Park Golf Course Men's Seniors A Flight

Rick Lewis 149
Tony Gadeski 158
Dave Hopper 159
Jim Conrad 159
Bruce Burkett 160
Dave Krause 160
Will Townsley 162
Carl Greulich 162
Mike Martin 167

Randy Mace 168
Terry Churchill 168
Dave Hineegardner 173
Jerry Marlin 193

B Flight

Lyle Martell 188
German Ruiz 194
Ron Saxton 201
Mark Schlutt 204

Women's Division

Candy Seals N/A
Jamie Moody N/A
Rose Prenkert N/A

INCREASE

Continued from page B1

158,260, despite a 1.8 percent decrease in boys enrollment. Girls participation rose 0.7 percent to 112,377, while girls enrollment dipped 1.9 percent from the previous school year.

MHSAA participation totals count students once for each sport in which they participate, meaning students who are multiple-sport athletes are counted more than once. The boys participation total for 2023-24 was its highest since 2018-19, predating the sharp decrease brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2020-21 school year.

Only 11 sports saw increases in participation during 2023-24 — compared to 18 sports that reported increases between 2021-22 and 2022-23. However, two sports set participation records this past school year. Girls golf reported 3,936 athletes, an increase of 6.2 percent from the previous year and that sport's most since 2002-03. Girls lacrosse broke its record set in 2019-20 with 3,245 athletes, up nine-tenths of a percent from the previous year.

Wrestling reported the largest increase in participation for the second-straight school year, this time by 12.8 percent with 11,814 athletes — and the rise again mostly attributable to the rapid growth in girls participation in the sport, which jumped another 39 percent with 1,216 wrestlers this past season. Girls tennis enjoyed the next largest participation jump, increasing 9.1 percent with 8,911 athletes, that sport's



FILE PHOTO | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

High school wrestling in the state of Michigan increased 12.8 percent in 2024-25 with 11,814 athletes participating. The MHSAA attributes the increase in part to the growth of girls wrestling.

most since 2018-19.

Both girls and boys track & field increased for the third-straight year, girls by 5.2 percent to 17,325 competitors and boys 2.9 percent to 23,888. Boys lacrosse (up 3.9 percent to 5,236 athletes) and boys golf (up 3.3 percent to 7,222) also joined their girls counterparts in those sports in trending upward.

Boys soccer (up 5.1 percent to 13,953 athletes), girls competitive cheer (3.9 percent to 6,172) and football (11 and 8-play-

er combined — 0.5 percent to 35,174) also showed increases. Football remains the most-played sport statewide with more than 11,000 more athletes than the next highest, boys track and field, and the 2023-24 football participation total was that sport's highest since 2018-19. Boys basketball (20,199 participants), girls volleyball (19,119) and girls track and field ranked third through fifth, respectively, among the state's most-played sports this past school year.

Although 17 sports saw lower participation in 2023-24 than the previous year, five experienced decreases smaller than the overall 1.8-percent loss in enrollment at member schools — boys ice hockey (-0.03 percent with just one fewer participant than in 2022-23), girls soccer (-0.3 percent), girls volleyball (-0.8 percent), boys tennis (-1.2 percent), boys cross country (-1.3 percent) and girls softball (-1.5 percent). Girls cross country just missed that line with only a 1.9-percent

decrease from the previous year.

The participation figures are gathered annually from MHSAA member schools to submit to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) for compiling of its national participation survey. Results of Michigan surveys from the 2000-01 school year to present may be viewed on the MHSAA Website — mhsaa.com — by clicking on Schools > Administrators > Sports Participation Listing.

FOOTBALL

Continued from page B1

The show will be live streamed to Friday Football Tailgate's YouTube and Facebook platforms.

Little Red Fern Productions and TPC Technologies recently produced United Way of Southwest Michigan's Rock the Boat Cardboard Boat Races at The Inn at Harbor Shores in St. Joseph, demonstrating their commitment to creating engaging and dynamic community events.

What to Expect

Exclusive Interviews: Get up close and personal with high school football coaches, players, and notable guests as they share their insights and anecdotes.

Insightful Analysis: A seasoned production team, with years of experience in sports entertainment, delivers expert analysis, adding depth and context to each matchup.

Lively Pre-game Atmosphere: The Friday Football Tailgate set consists of an RV (courtesy of Elkhart's Alliance RV), a jumbotron, and a large event stage.

Event Details

The show will launch from 5 to 6 p.m., at four high school campuses this fall:

August 30 — Niles High School at St. Joseph High School

September 13 — Portage Central High School at Lakeshore High School

October 4 — Watervliet High School at South Haven High School

October 18 — Buchanan High School at Dowagiac High School

How to Get Involved

Be a Part of the Live Audience: Join us at each game listed above for an unforgettable experience. Bring your signs, cheers, and team spirit to be featured on the show.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Elevate your brand by becoming a sponsor. Connect with our dedicated team to explore the various sponsorship levels available. Current sponsors are RealTruck.com, Boss Services, RE/MAX By The Lake, and Alliance RV.

Stay Connected

Follow Friday Football Tailgate on Facebook or Instagram for behind-the-scenes glimpses, updates, and exciting announcements.



FILE PHOTO | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Dowagiac and Buchanan will be featured on the Friday Football Tailgate pregame show when the Chieftains host the Bucks Oct. 18.

Marijuana to be on November ballot in Niles Township

By **MAXWELL HARDEN**
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Niles Charter Township residents will have the opportunity to vote in November to decide if they want to opt-in to state funding by allowing marijuana establishments within the township borders.

The Township Board of Trustees approved “The Niles Charter Township Marijuana Establishments Ordinance” ballot proposal and language for submission to township voters at the Nov. 5 election. If voted in, the ordinance would repeal in part current law barring marijuana establishments from doing business in the township.

The ordinance allows for a minimum of four retail establishments in the township on 11th Street south of Fulkerson road as well as one marihuana transporter and one safety compliance facility. However, the language does allow the Township Board to enact police power and zoning ordinances that set a maximum number of such establishments to be allowed within the Township.

Township officials voted unanimously in May 2019 to opt out of the recreational marijuana business. In 2022, Voters turned down a proposal that would have allowed marijuana establishments in Niles Charter Township limits.

While the Niles Charter Township Board of Trustees’ position on the topic has not changed, the township board of trustees said it would not oppose the proposal’s efforts to force a change.

The City of Niles, Buchanan, Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, Berrien County and Cass County were among the 269 municipali-

ties statewide that received payments from the marijuana Regulation Fund in March. Each eligible municipality and county received more than \$59,000 for every licensed retail store and microbusiness located within its jurisdiction.

For the 2023 state fiscal year, there was more than \$290.3 million available for distribution from the Marihuana Regulation Fund.

The distribution breakdown for local municipalities and counties is as follows:

- Buchanan: Number of licenses – six; city distributions – \$354,518.10
- Cassopolis: Licenses – two; village distributions – \$118,172.70
- Dowagiac: Licenses – one; city distributions – 59,086.35
- Edwardsburg: Licenses – two; village distributions – \$118,172.70
- City of Niles: Licenses – six; city distributions – \$354,518.10
- Berrien County: Licenses – 19; county distributions – \$1,122,640.65
- Cass County: Licenses – 7; county distributions – 413,604.45

Below is the official ordinance language approved by Niles Charter Township:

Section 1 – Title

The title of this ordinance shall be the “The Niles Charter Township Marihuana Establishments Ordinance.”

Section 2 – Repeal

This ordinance repeals in part the “The Niles Charter Township Prohibition of Marihuana Establishments Ordinance,” No. 79. Sections I-IV, 5-20-2019, prohibiting marijuana establishments within Niles Charter Township.

Section 3 – Definitions

a) “MRTMA” means the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of marijuana Act, 2018 IL 1, MCL 333.27951 et seq., hereinafter “MRTMA.”

b) All of the definitions provided in the MRTMA are incorporated by reference into this ordinance, except as otherwise provided in this ordinance.

c) The term “marijuana” is synonymous with marihuana.”

d) The term Michigan Cannabis Regulatory Agency is synonymous with the term Michigan Marijuana Regulatory Agency, or any successor agency, and is hereinafter referred to as “CRA or the “Agency.”

Section 4 – Number of Establishments Allowed

The number of marijuana establishments allowed within the Charter Township of Niles is as follows:

a) Marijuana retailer as defined in MRTMA. A minimum of 4 marijuana retail establishments allowed within the Township. The Niles Charter Township Board may at any time enact related police power and zoning ordinances that set a maximum number of such establishments to be allowed within the Township. Marijuana retailers shall be located on a real property parcel having a minimum of 150 feet of road frontage on 11thh Street south of Fulkerson Road in Niles Charter Township.

b) Marijuana secure transporter as defined in MRTMA. A minimum of 1 marijuana secure transporter establishment is allowed within the Township. The Township Board may at any time enact related police power and zoning ordinances that set a maximum number of

such establishments to be allowed within the Township.

c) Marijuana safety compliance facility as defined in MRTMA. A minimum of 1 marijuana safety compliance facility is allowed within the Township. The Township Board may at any time enact related police power and zoning ordinances that set a maximum number of such establishments to be allowed within the Township.

Section 5 – Police Power and Zoning Ordinances

The Niles Charter Township Board may at any time elect to enact related police power and zoning regulations that are not unreasonably impracticable and which do not conflict with the MRTMA or any rule promulgated pursuant to the MRTMA. The Niles Charter Township Board of Trustees may further establish regulations, such as administrative measures; application forms; license, permit, and renewal criteria specifically enabling applicants to promptly obtain and renew marijuana establishment licenses and permits as the The Niles Charter Township Board of Trustees shall deem appropriate, and if such regulations are in place, they may provide that no manjuana establishment shall operate without a Township license or permit.

Section 6 – Authority to Operate in the Absence of Police Power and Zoning regulations

If the Township does not enact related police power and zoning ordinances or regulations, and until such ordinances are enacted, to provide for the number of marijuana establishments to operate within Niles Charter Township, any person that otherwise meets the criteria

for a license under MRTMA to operate a manjuana establishment allowed under this Ordinance at the proposed location shall be deemed authorized to operate such establishment in Niles Charter Township in accordance with and pursuant to MRTMA and the CRA rules and regulations. Such operation

is lawful without any Township permit or license whatsoever and may continue unless and until the Township Board deems It appropriate to enact related licensing, police power ordinances, and zoning regulations and issues appropriate local permits or licenses to the licensee.



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MARRIAGE LICENSES

ST. JOSEPH — The following couples were recently granted marriage licenses by the Berrien County Clerk’s Office:

Erin Kathleen Hamilton, Niles, to **Edward Thomas Torres**, Niles

Cherina Ann Bailey, Niles, to **Lawrence Frederick Weis-**

er II, Niles

Leslie Anne Johnson, Berrien Springs, to **Jeffrey Wayne Hettinger**, Berrien Springs

Samantha Anna McElligott, Buchanan, to **Jonathan Alexander Belin**, Berrien Springs

BID

Continued from page A1

In other business, the board approved a condemnation order for 18 township properties, 17 of which are located in Country Acres Mobile Home Community. The properties – which are currently vacant – were condemned due to unsafe

living conditions and the failure of ownership to address those conditions. While a timetable has not been established, the township is working closely with Country Acres management to arrange for the demolition of the condemned properties.

“I have worked hard to try to get the owners to let me tear them down,” a Country Acres manager said at the meeting. “It’s been a hard process.”

In further business, the township board:

Approved the purchase of a forklift truck for \$4,500 and a \$200 delivery fee. The used truck will be used by the Department of Public Works.

Approved a contract with EagleView Technologies – a technology provider of aerial imagery, data analytics and geographic information system mapping – at a cost of \$3,800 per year for six years. Durm-Hiatt said the program will improve the township’s code enforcement capabilities.

FORT

Continued from page A2

rides on a 30-foot replica voyageur canoe along the St. Joseph River.

In addition to touring the site, guests were able to engage Fort St. Joseph re-enactors who portrayed “people of the post” and offer fun activities and demonstrations.

Attendance and all of the Open House activities were free though donations were accepted to support the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project. Sponsors included Support the Fort, Inc., the City of Niles, and Western Michigan University.

The dig season was an eventful one for students and staff. A trailer storing archaeological equipment was stolen from the site in June. Thanks to the generous equipment donations from the Niles community and beyond, the students and staff were able to resume digging in short order.

“There were so many people that were like ‘what do you need,’ ‘where do I send them to you,’ ‘I have this ex-

tra shovel,’ ‘I have the kitty litter buckets,’” Hartley said. “It was amazing – I don’t even know how to explain it any better than the fact that people saw that we were in need. They knew how important our product is and what it can offer to both the public and the broader community.”

When the fort site was flooded, the team was able to transition to learning about the curation of artifacts.

“We were able to look at the old collections and show students the importance of curation and how you can do collection-based research,”

Hartley said. “We showed them how to take core samples and the importance of trying different strategies, depending on what the weather is, to really get out your research questions. It was a nice addition – unexpected, but nice.”

According to Hartley, the theme of this year’s archaeology season is “Connections – Exploring Early France and New France.”

“What we’re hoping to do is just highlight those connections and how we can learn something from the people of the past and how we can

connect it to today and the history that’s happening in both places. It’s a really nice way to demonstrate how vast the trade networks were.”

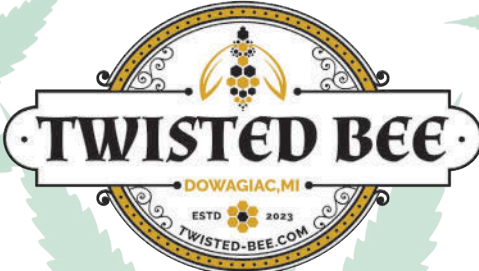


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EPA Begins Review of U.S. Aviox Superfund Site Superfund Site Niles, Michigan

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is conducting a five-year review of the U.S. Aviox site at the 1056 Huntly Road in Niles, Michigan. The Superfund law requires regular checkups of sites that have been cleaned-up -with waste managed on-site – to make sure the cleanup continues to protect people and the environment. This is the sixth five-year review for this site.

EPA's cleanup included removing contaminated soil, and installing extraction wells to pump out and treat contaminated ground water before discharging it to the surface water. As site conditions changed, EPA modified the remedy in 2004 to treat groundwater contaminated in place and continually monitor the contaminant levels. This remedy also required residents on private wells upgradient of the site to treat their groundwater. Affected residents located within or downgradient of the contaminated groundwater have been connected to the Niles Municipal Water supply. Land use restrictions also prohibit the use of site groundwater to prevent exposure.

More information is available at the Niles District Library, 620 E Main St., Niles, MI and at <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/us-aviox>. The review should be completed by March 2025.

The five-year review is an opportunity for you to tell EPA about site conditions and any concerns you have. Contact:

Cheryl Allen
Community Involvement Coordinator
312-353-6196
allen.cheryl@epa.gov

Jennifer Braveboy
Remedial Project Manager
312-353-5781
braveboy;jennifer@epa.gov

You may also call EPA toll-free, 800-621-8431, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (CST), weekdays.

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